

I Love You All The Way To Heaven!

Noah and his grandpa had a game. Before leaving each other's company, they would exchange I love yous with an illustration of "this much" by showing the opening between their hands until finally four-year-old Noah would have his hands and arms stretched to the max to illustrate his love to Grandpa. Noah, his dad and sister, Summer were on their way home after being with their family, when a man speeding through a stop sign slammed into their car. The three were killed. The last thing Noah said to Grandpa before he left his presence was, "I love you, Grandpa, all the way to Heaven!"

Today in north Georgia, there is a park named Noah's Parc named after the little guy. There is a lovely section named Summer Rain after his sister. It's a place of little animated animals and rainbows. A beautiful, peaceful place. Noah's daddy was married to Cathy Griffin's niece. Can you imagine how lonely life would be for this precious young wife and mother to have lost her husband and two children in such a manner? Just yesterday Cathy was telling us of the miss, yet the great grace that God has supplied to the remaining family. When Barbara and I called on the Griffins yesterday, the details of the passing of these three family members were given to us.

How do we handle crises such as these? How does one go on?

1. We go on because we understand pain and heartbreak is not always the hand of punishment for evil.

Often, even among God's people, we want to blame others or ourselves when heartbreak comes. Natural human response to sorrow is "What did we do wrong?" This was the question the disciples were vexing themselves with in John 9: 1, 2, "*And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.*"

And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" We see the desperate disciples demanding an answer as to why the man was born blind. One of the remarkable observations is the disciples actually asked if the parents or even the man himself were at fault for his being born blind. If this were not so sad, it would be humorous to presuppose that a little baby before it was born could accrue enough evil that he could provoke an arbitrary hand of punishment to come out against him. I appreciate so much the answer our Lord gave, "*Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him*" (John 9:1-3). There was a purpose greater than man could embrace. The Lord Jesus was saying it was not for sin that this man was blinded, but for God's glory. It was to show others the manifested work of God.

Job was a righteous man. He was so righteous that the Scripture says, "*And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*" (Job 1:8). The Lord Himself declares Job to be the most upright man in the earth and yet Job's friends took their turn, chapter after chapter to rebuke and attempt to explain why evil had come his way. It was so painful for Job that he cried out: "*I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all*" (Job 16:2). Job's own wife tells him to curse God and die, yet his answer tells us that this righteous man accepted God's purpose, greater than his own understanding. We hear his faith echoed in these words: "*...What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips*" (Job 2:10). It was this faith that brought Job forty chapters later to these words: "*So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning...*" (Job 42:12).

2. We go on because we accept that the nature of God is good and He cannot and will not do

wrong.

Abraham understood this when he said, “...*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*” (Genesis 18:25). God is too good to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake! King Jeroboam did evil in the sight of the Lord. He and his wife’s baby certainly did not do wrong, yet God took the baby to heaven. The Lord, speaking of the passing of the little boy, said through his prophet, “*And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam*” (I Kings 14:13).

One of the most touching things is said of this little boy, “...*because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel....*” He went to Heaven not because he was bad, but because God saw something good! Yesterday I was reminded of the funeral I conducted for the Griffin’s one and only boy. This verse came to me as I thought of Richard Griffin. At his funeral, I used the story that Charles Spurgeon used of the Gardener. His text was John 20:15, where Mary supposed Jesus in His resurrected state to be the gardener. As the Gardener is Sovereign over His garden so the Lord in His Sovereign choice nourishes the special rose bud, watches it and cares for it. And then just before the bud opens, he clips it, places it in warm water for his family in the house to see it open in all its splendor. Spurgeon likened the person taken early as the bud God saves for Heaven before it flowers.

3. We go on because we accept the hurt now in exchange for a greater heartbreak had things been otherwise.

There are some things worse than death for the Christian. Paul said, “*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*” (II Corinthians 5:8). I need not speculate about those things that we do not know, but God knows would be best that we not live to see or experience. The Bible says, “*The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come*” (Isaiah 57:1). The Lord is saying, people are not “getting it.” I am removing some righteous ones from the earth, because I know of evil that is going to come, so I choose to bring them to heaven now. When we cannot trace Him’ we trust Him.

4. We go on because we love all the way to heaven.

Little Noah was expressing how great his love was for Grandpa. In his desire to address his great love, he, in fact, uttered a profound truth - that there is more to love and Christianity than this life as we know it. Jesus said, “...*Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?*” (Matthew 21:16). Out of the mouth of this babe came a great truth - we as Christians are not divided by death; we love all the way to Heaven! And here is what we ultimately look forward to: “*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*” (John 21:4).

- Pastor Pope -

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